

Missouri Department of Conservation

Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery Annual Report



Dear Conservation Partner,

In May 2003, the Missouri Department of Conservation set into action the Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery. The goal of the plan is to reverse the downward trend in bobwhite quail abundance and bobwhite-related recreation in Missouri. The plan has and will continue to guide the Department's efforts to increase bobwhite populations statewide and recreation related to bobwhite and grassland wildlife as we work with resource management partners and landowners to restore habitat in Missouri.

We are now entering the fifth year of the quail plan, and I am happy to report we have made significant progress for quail and grassland birds in Missouri. Much of the progress was made possible by strong partnerships and a statewide interest in restoring habitat for quail and grassland birds. The results on both private and public land and regional achievements are impressive, but more work is still needed. Landscape improvement in bobwhite abundance will not be easy. It will take cooperation and strong partnerships from landowners, stakeholders and conservation groups.

The timing is still right to restore habitat for bobwhites. As we enter 2008, we anxiously await the passing of the next Federal Farm Bill. This legislation has and will continue to play a critical role in restoring quail and grassland bird habitats on private lands. National bird conservation plans such as Partners In Flight, North America Bird Conservation Initiative and Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative have further emphasized the importance of landscape level habitat improvements for bobwhites and a coordinated effort between all conservation partners.

As you read this report, I hope you are encouraged by the progress Missourians have made for bobwhites. The Missouri Department of Conservation is committed to this plan, and the people and resources of Missouri. I encourage you to do your part and help with the recovery of northern bobwhite and grassland wildlife by contacting your regional Missouri Department of Conservation office more details. Think big, start small, just start!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Hoskins".

John Hoskins
Director

Missouri Department of Conservation Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery Annual Report

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Introduction

In May 2003, Director John Hoskins signed the Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery for the restoration and enhancement of quail populations in Missouri. The goal of the plan is to reverse the downward trend in bobwhite abundance and bobwhite-related recreation in Missouri. The statewide plan identified four primary goals and was further supported by each region developing a Regional Quail Plan.

While northern bobwhites are the primary focus, the recovery plan will benefit numerous wildlife species, reduce soil and water erosion, improve water quality, and provide greater outdoor recreational opportunities for Missourians. Likewise, other Department initiatives such as the Greater Prairie Chicken Recovery Plan, Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy and Conservation Opportunity Areas are helping restore quail habitat on private and public lands. The Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery will also help the Department achieve several goals identified within the strategic plan – The Next Generation of Conservation:

- Conserving Plants, Animals and Their Habitats
- Protecting Clean and Healthy Waters
- Promoting Healthy Trees and Forests
- Preserving Missouri's Outdoor Recreation Heritage
- Teaching Missourians About Fish, Forest and Wildlife Resources
- Helping Private Landowners Advance Conservation
- Serving Nature and You on Conservation Areas

The Next Generation of Conservation is the Department's strategic, long-term plan that was developed with stakeholder input from private landowners, farmers, conservation organizations, and rural and urban leaders. The plan will help guide how the Missouri Department of Conservation provides public service to all Missourians that will benefit fish, forest and wildlife in future years. The Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery is an essential part of this long-term plan.

Missouri's efforts to increase northern bobwhite numbers and other wildlife species with similar habitat needs are a part of a national initiative. The Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) was organized to develop population and habitat objectives in each of the 15 Bird Conservation Regions where northern bobwhite occur. The NBCI is a coordinated and cooperative approach for integrating the needs of quail into other bird management plans. Missouri's accomplishments have been recognized nationally. In 2007, the Missouri Department of Conservation was recognized as the winner of the NBCI Group Achievement Award for the Department's effort toward implementation of the NBCI plan and other accomplishments related to Farm Bill programs.

Public Land Accomplishments and Quail Emphasis Areas

As a part of the Strategic Guidance for Northern Bobwhite Recovery, the Department is working to improve quail and grassland bird habitat on conservation areas throughout the state. In fact, the Missouri Department of Conservation completes approximately 70,000 acres of quail-friendly habitat work each year on conservation areas. Each year, Department staff complete approximately 150,000 acres of habitat management on conservation areas. The Department also worked with over 360 permittee farmers by renting 68,000 acres of cropland, hayland and grassland on conservation areas.

Nineteen conservation areas have also been identified as Quail Emphasis Areas (see map). The purpose of these areas is to demonstrate good quail habitat management and to provide a quality quail hunting experience. Quail Emphasis Areas were selected based on existing habitat qualities,

public demand, and size of the area. To better promote Quail Emphasis Areas the Department's Outreach and Education Division has created a Quail Emphasis Area webpage: mdc.mo.gov/hunt/gamebird/gea.htm

The long-term goals for Quail Emphasis Areas are: 1) produce a sustainable population (10 year average) of one bobwhite quail per two acres and 2) if needed, regulate hunting opportunities to maintain the population of one quail per two acres. Quail Emphasis Area staff are monitoring quail and songbird responses to management efforts by conducting spring and fall surveys. Area managers are also using GIS to track habitat types and management on the area. The goal is to better track applied practices and changes in cover over time.

"I had the privilege of hunting a Quail Emphasis Area and another Conservation Area this last January and cannot come close to telling you how happy I was to see the effort taken to improve conditions for quail and small game and to top everything off I found plenty of quail and saw quite a few rabbits. These two properties had what I have always believed it takes to produce quail."
JOHN HEITKAMP

In 2007, an estimated 75,727 acres of quail friendly habitat work was completed on conservation areas. Most of this work was done in old fields, grasslands, prairies, savannas, glades and woodlands. In 2005 and 2006, an estimated 79,000 and 68,100 acres of habitat were improved for quail and grassland birds, respectively.

Department staff are using a variety of management practices to improve habitat conditions on Quail Emphasis Areas and other conservation areas. For example, prescribed fire and strip disking are being used to open bare ground and promote seed producing plants for brooding habitat. Biologists are also using managed grazing to improve brooding cover for quail and grassland birds on some conservation areas. Work teams are planting food plots and overseeding native forbs and legumes in warm-season grass fields to create even more brood cover for quail. We are enhancing woody and shrubby cover by creating brush piles, edge feathering and planting shrubs. Since 2005, the Department has completed a total of 364 miles of edge development and enhancement on conservation areas.

In recent years, the Department has increased natural community restoration efforts on many conservation areas. Wildlife and Forestry Divisions are working together to restore natural communities such as woodlands, savannas and glades on many conservation areas. Restoration involves removing woody vegetation, invasive species and reintroducing prescribed fire. In the future, these restored communities will provide favorable habitat for northern bobwhite.

In Grassland Coalition Focus Areas, work teams are restoring and re-establishing tallgrass prairie and removing trees to create open grasslands to benefit greater prairie chickens and other grassland birds. Habitat accomplishments made for the greater prairie chicken also benefit northern bobwhite. In fact, managers with conservation areas in southwestern Missouri Grassland Coalition Focus Areas have reported quail densities equal to those on many Quail Emphasis Areas.

Biologists at Locust Creek and Davisdale Conservation Areas have been tracking radio-collared quail for two years to determine what types of habitat the birds are using compared to what habitats the biologists felt the birds would use. Information gained from this study has helped biologists better understand the importance of brooding cover and shrubby cover for quail. This information is being shared with other biologists and landowners at training sessions and workshops.

Department Training

In 2007, Department staff participated in workshops and technical sessions devoted to quail management and ecology. These classes provided staff and conservation partners training on how to manage cropland, grassland, early successional habitats, and natural communities for northern bobwhite.

Over 160 Department staff attended four “Quail 201” classes during the summer of 2007. The course provided training on quail habitat requirements, management, budgeting, and how to develop a long-term plan. In 2008, two “Quail 201” courses will be held and a “Quail 301” course will be offered to all Department employees. The “Quail 301” course is a two day class that will cover a variety of topics including: habitat management, research, regulations, and how to market Quail Focus Areas. Since 2004, Department staff have participated in numerous training sessions to expand their knowledge of quail biology and habitat management.

In 2007, Wildlife Division completed field reviews of Thomas Hill Reservoir and Crowley's Ridge Conservation Areas, both are Quail Emphasis Areas. Several reviews are planned for other Quail Emphasis Areas in 2008. The purpose of the review is to evaluate habitat conditions and management for quail on each Quail Emphasis Area. A thorough evaluation of habitat conditions will help area managers and district staff identify and prioritize future management and budget needs to achieve the goal of one bird per two acres by maximizing usable space and where possible, providing ideal habitat conditions.

Private Land Accomplishments and Quail Focus Areas

In 2004, the Department established 46 private land Quail Focus Areas with input from landowners and conservation partners. The purpose of establishing Quail Focus Areas was to show landscape improvement in quail densities and to promote quail and grassland bird conservation.

Quail Focus Areas were identified in areas where landowners were already managing for quail, near conservation areas with good quail habitat, and/or where conservation partners have expressed an interest in quail management. The plan is for Department staff and conservation partners to target all landowners within these focus areas by marketing quail management and then providing technical and financial assistance to interested landowners. In the meantime, staff continue to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners outside of focus areas to help these landowners meet their resource objectives.

Since 2004, several focus areas have got off to a great start. Quail Focus Areas in Andrew, Buchanan, Cass, Caldwell, Carroll, Knox, Lawrence, Saline, Scott, and Wright counties have shown an increase in quail densities. As a result, more landowners are participating in workshops and cost share programs to improve habitat conditions in the focus area. In some focus areas, landowners, conservation partners and Department staff are also monitoring quail densities to determine population densities within the focus area.

Other focus areas in the state are experiencing some success, but a lot depends on landowner interest. Therefore, in late 2007, Department staff from all divisions took a close look at the existing Quail Focus Areas and revised boundaries and locations. As a part of the review, staff have set either a population density or habitat restoration goal for the focus area. Today, most focus areas are between 10,000 and 30,000 acres in size, but some are even larger because of widespread landowner interest and success. To help promote these targeted areas, staff have developed signs that display each focus area's name. Private Land Services staff will be distributing the sign to any active cooperators within a focus area.

Research and Monitoring

Resource Science Division continues to monitor quail and songbird densities on 60 cropfields with CP33 buffers and 60 unbuffered cropfields as a part of the national CP33 monitoring project. Nationwide, CP33 monitoring has shown a positive response by bobwhite and a variable response by priority songbird species in established CP33 habitat buffers around cropfields compared to control (unbuffered) fields. As a part of another study, Resource Science Division is working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to measure soil erosion in association with the installation of CP33 buffers. Preliminary information suggests that the reduced seeding rates within CP33 buffers adequately protect soil and water resources and provides the bare ground required by quail.

Resource Science Division and the University of Missouri's Food and Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) completed a farm-level economic analysis of participation in CP-33. Landowners from Ralls, Carroll, and Bates County enrolled in CP-33 participated as panelists for a representative farm. Using real world yields, prices, operational costs, and soil rental rates within a sophisticated computer model, the economics were modeled for a 10 year period through the study. The information produced through the study will be used to demonstrate the cost-benefits of participating in the CP-33 program on a statewide scale.

In the Northwest Region, Department biologists are monitoring quail and songbird densities on CRP fields that have been edge feathered compared to CRP fields with no edge feathering. Preliminary results indicate northern bobwhites, field sparrows, Henslow's sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, dickcissels, and eastern meadowlarks increased on edge feathered fields compared to control fields. Northern bobwhites in particular were nearly four times as abundant during the 2006 summer breeding season on edge feathered sites compared to control fields, but this difference has been negligible during fall covey counts.

Farm Bill Programs

Through a cooperative agreement, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was expanded to parts of 79 counties in Missouri. In early December 2007, the Farm Service Agency informed the Conservation Commission that all 20,000 acres receiving a \$100 per acre incentive from the Department was allocated. As a part of the CREP program, native vegetation and mid-contract management will be required on most practices.

Currently, 26,500 acres have been enrolled in the CP-33 practice, with 5,500 acres still available. Missouri currently has the third highest allocation in the nation. In recent months the sign-up has slowed due to high grain prices. In 2008, sign up will begin for the CCRP – CP-38 SAFE program which will bring an additional 19,200 acres of quail and grassland bird-friendly habitat to Missouri. Some of these acres will be targeted towards greater prairie chicken recovery efforts in Grassland Coalition Focus Areas and sand prairie restoration in southeast Missouri. Both will result in improved quail and grassland bird habitat.

In 2007, Private Land Services worked with the Farm Services Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service to require mid-contract management on new CP-21, CP-29 and CP-30 contracts over five acres. Mid-contract management previously was not required on these continuous CRP practices. As a result, filter strips and buffers will provide better brooding habitat for quail. The Department's strong partnership with both agencies has helped further enhance these CRP practices for northern bobwhite.

Other Farm Bill programs such as the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) have created a significant amount of quail and grassland bird habitat on private land. Existing WHIP and EQIP contracts accounted for an additional 15,687 acres of quail and grassland bird habitat in 2007, and 37,450 acres in 2006. Both programs have been

instrumental in helping landowners restore natural communities like prairie, glade, woodland and savanna, and to create early successional habitats for quail and other wildlife species on both recreational and working lands.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service has reported that six counties in the Missouri Bootheel, which are in Conservation Security Program (CSP) watersheds, have established over ten million linear feet of native grass and forbs field borders. To date, Missouri has had wildlife success with CSP, which no other state appears to be able to match. In fact, Scott County is likely the first county in the nation to reach habitat goals identified within the NBCI plan. Most of this work may not have been completed if it was not for interested landowners and the strong partnership between the Missouri Department of Conservation, Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service.

In 2007, farmers, quail hunters and Conservation Agent Roadside Surveys reported a significant increase in quail numbers in the Southeast Region. In fact, southeast Missouri quail hunters have reported seeing more than one covey per hour. In other parts of the state, landowners participating in CSP and other conservation programs have seen an increase in quail as a result of the habitat work they have done.

"While hunting near New Madrid on the last Sunday of the season, we made it a point to hunt only the fence rows that had an adjacent strip of soybeans or corn. We made 5 stops and found 6 coveys in about 4 1/2 hours. I haven't done that in 15 or 20 years. The programs are working, now it is just a matter of time."

BUCK HUNTER

Private Land Achievements

In 2007, the Department and conservation partners continued to assist landowners with land enrolled in CRP to further enhance and improve these grasslands for northern bobwhite. The Department of Conservation and Missouri Association of Soil and Water Districts completed work on a 4-year cooperative agreement called "CRP-BOB". The program provided \$240,000 in cost share to enhance CRP grasslands and buffers for quail by providing cost share to landowners interested in edge feathering, planting food plots, controlling invasive vegetation, prescribed burning, light disking or spraying. As part of the CRP-BOB contract, landowners agreed to complete mid-contract management such as light disking, prescribed burning or herbicide applications to enhance CRP grasslands which further enhanced CRP grasslands for quail.

In early 2007, Quail Unlimited received funds through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant. The grant provided an additional \$56,300 in cost share to landowners in targeted counties to enhance existing CRP grasslands and adjacent woody edges for northern bobwhite. Most of the cost share funds went towards edge feathering and brooding cover enhancement. The same grant provided \$40,000 in cost share funds in 2005 and 2006 to Missouri landowners. These funds were used to create demonstration farms within each region and to enhance brooding and shrubby cover around CRP fields.

Through the Missouri Department of Conservation Landowner Cost Share Program over \$1 million was allocated to Missouri landowners in 2007. Approximately \$496,190 funded quail and grassland bird friendly practices, which impacted 5,851 acres. In 2006, over \$1 million in cost share funds was also made available to landowners, with approximately \$614,617 funding quail friendly practices, which impacted 7,947 acres. Cost share dollars were commonly used to enhance nesting and brooding cover and to create shrubby cover for northern bobwhite.

Through cooperative agreements with Quail Forever and Quail Unlimited, an additional \$200,000 in cost share funds was provided to Missouri landowners in 2007. Through a 50:50 match with the Department, this money has helped restore or maintain over 1,000 acres of quail and grassland bird habitat. Private Land Conservationists and other biologists have used these funds to enhance nesting and brooding cover and to create shrubby cover for quail.

Other partnerships and cost share programs have also benefited northern bobwhite in Missouri. The National Wild Turkey Federation Superfund Grant program has provided critical funding for native warm-season grass drills, herbicide, seed, or to hire habitat contractors for both private and public land projects. Superfund grants will benefit wild turkey, as well as quail and other species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's, "Partners Program" is also helping restore habitat such as woodlands, savanna, prairie and glades for threatened or endangered species on private land. Through this cost share program, habitat work completed for threatened or endangered species will also benefit quail and other species.

"After only a few quick years with your hands on activity and outlined programs we have made a very positive turn around. Your covey headquarters approach along with edge feathering, soil tests, and converting to warm-season grasses and beautiful wildflowers have all created an environment the quail are falling in love with. Four years ago I did not hear or see any quail. Today, I guesstimate we have 6 coveys and growing."

RON & PAT SKEEN
FRANKLIN COUNTY

In late 2007, the Department of Conservation accepted applications for the Early Successional Habitat Challenge Grant. Through this program, the Department will provide \$190,000 to organizations like Quail Forever, Quail Unlimited and the National Wild Turkey Federation. With matching funds from each organization, the program will provide approximately \$380,000 in cost share to Missouri landowners interested in creating early successional and natural community habitats that will benefit northern bobwhite.

In northeast Missouri, the Private Land Services Division has worked with Quail Unlimited and Quail Forever to hire biologists to assist private landowners. The Quail Forever biologist, Chris Lee, is located in Clark County, and the Quail Unlimited biologist, Corinne Mann, is located in Monroe County. Both positions have been critical in marketing and developing Quail Focus Areas and assisting landowners interested in quail management. For three years, the West Central Missouri Quail Unlimited Chapter has supported a Private Land Biologist position to help landowners in Cass County. This cooperative position has played a significant role in the wide spread habitat restoration efforts in Cass County, which received national recognition for their achievements.

In 2007, landowner success stories from around the state show that individuals are restoring wild northern bobwhite populations on their property. In some cases, landowners have seen almost instant success while others have taken two or three years to see a measurable increase in coveys – nonetheless a success. Recent landowner success stories are being shared with others, and many of the stories have appeared in the Conservationist, Covey Headquarter Newsletter and other media outlets. Keep your eyes open for more in 2008!

Reaching out to Missourians

In 2004, a Quail and Grassland Bird Leadership Council was formed to increase awareness and support for quail and grassland bird recovery efforts. The council meets periodically, and in 2007 the group met twice to hear reports on recent accomplishments related to the quail plan and to discuss ways to further promote quail and grassland bird conservation on private and public lands.

Council members also participated in “Quail 201” and other workshops to learn more about quail management and to show their support for the quail plan. The council, representing various groups and organizations, played a role in the creation of the youth quail and pheasant seasons, helped increased public and private land management efforts, helped develop training programs for Department staff and conservation partners, and provided recommendations to USDA on the CP33 and CP38 programs.

In 2006, Quail Unlimited and Quail Forever each received five lifetime hunting and fishing permits from the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation. Both organizations have raffled or given away the permits to ten youth at local banquets and special events. Congratulations to these ten lucky youth.

In June 2007, twenty-five high school students participated in the Quail Academy at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg. Sponsored by Quail Unlimited, the week long course provides high school students a unique opportunity to learn about quail and grassland birds, leadership skills, hunter safety, sporting clays, and a great chance to have fun. Department biologists assisted with the academy by providing field trips and presentations.

In 2007, numerous landowner workshops, field days and outdoor events were held to promote quail conservation efforts. Several workshops and meetings were held in Quail Focus Areas to encourage greater landowner participation. In many cases, Department staff worked with county Soil and Water Districts, Missouri Cattlemen's Association Chapters, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Quail Unlimited and Quail Forever to host workshops and field days.

The Department continues to work with agriculture and commodity groups to further develop partnerships and to promote Department initiatives such as the quail and greater prairie chicken plans. The Department's interaction with commodity and farming groups has been critical to the success in promoting conservation efforts. In recent months, Private Land Services has participated in the following conferences:

- 2007 Missouri Livestock Symposium
- Farm Bureau Annual Conference
- Governor's Conference on Agriculture
- Heart of America Grazing Conference
- Missouri Agribusiness Association Legislative Conference
- Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Training Conference
- Missouri Cattle Industry Annual Convention
- Missouri Pork Expo

For the second year, the University of Missouri, Department of Conservation, and the Missouri Soybean Association hosted a bobwhite quail and agriculture field day at the Bradford Farm Research and Extension Center in Columbia. Over 100 people attended the field day this past year. In recent years, over 5,000 people have participated in educational programs and field days at Bradford Farm including landowners, agribusiness, governmental agencies, Future Farmers of America Chapters, and other youth groups. Quail and grassland bird management and monitoring are an important part of the educational goals of Bradford Farm.

The Missouri Department of Conservation continues to promote upland game hunting by hosting special hunts for youth or women on licensed game bird shooting preserves. Staff from Outreach and Education, Protection, and Private Land Services Divisions hosted many of these events in 2007. These special events provided novice and experienced hunters an opportunity to learn more about upland game hunting, hunter safety and the basic habitat requirements of northern bobwhite.

Outreach and Marketing

The Missouri Department of Conservation staff continue to promote and market quail and grassland bird conservation and landowner success stories with the help from the Outreach and Education Division. In 2007, several landowner success stories were received from Department staff and landowners. Many of these stories have appeared in the Conservationist, the Covey Headquarters Newsletter, and 2008 Quail Events Calendar. Department staff and landowners continue to send in more success stories. The Missouri Department of Conservation and many partners continue to promote quail and grassland bird conservation efforts. Here are just a few examples of recent marketing efforts:

- The Covey Headquarters Newsletter
- Missouri Conservationist – nearly every issue over the past year has included quail habitat hints or landowner success stories
- Youth Quail and Pheasant Season advertisement
- MDC website revisions and new additions related to quail
- Creation of Quail Emphasis Area webpage
- Landowner success stories and frequent articles in Quail Unlimited and Quail Forever magazines
- Quail related articles in the Missouri Ruralist, Progressive Farmer, MFA 2008 Agronomy Guide, NRCS website, and MDC website
- Landowner field days and workshops
- Missouri Quail Unlimited – Quail Academy
- Quail Events Calendar – over 10,000 distributed in 2007 and 2008
- Missouri Department of Conservation, “Private Land Care” video series
- Quail Placemats distributed to cafes and banquets
- A new “Quail Friendly Plants of Missouri” book will be available in 2008. The book was developed by the Department and University of Missouri Extension Service
- “Quail Talking Points” for Conservation Agent radio shows

Regional Highlights

A key element of the state recovery plan was the development of Regional Quail Plans. In 2004, Department staff in each region created goals and objectives to restore quail and grassland bird habitat on private and public land. Department staff have been working with landowners and farmers to improve quail habitat on recreational and working farms. Field staff have also increased public land management efforts on Conservation Areas throughout the state. Another key component has been developing regional workshops and field days to promote quail and grassland bird habitat management and outdoor recreation related to quail conservation. It will ultimately be local and regional efforts that restore bobwhite habitat at a landscape level.

Central Region

Central Region Quail Emphasis Areas

Regional staff at Whetstone Creek, Davisdale and Lamine River Conservation Areas have increased efforts to improve early successional and natural community habitats for quail and other wildlife by eradicating invasive vegetation, reducing woody encroachment in old fields, woodlands and savannas, conducting landscape-level prescribed burns, and creating shrubby and woody cover for quail. Efforts to restore and manage natural communities and early successional habitats on Quail Emphasis Areas and many other conservation areas in the central region have resulted in good quail densities.

New Partnerships Benefit Landowners and Quail

Quail Forever and Quail Unlimited have started new chapters in central Missouri to the benefit of landowners and quail. Both organizations are providing cost share funds to landowners and helping spread the word about quail habitat management by hosting annual banquets and workshops.

The new Four Rivers Chapter of Quail Forever held their first banquet in February 2008 in Westphalia. The Ozark Border Quail Unlimited Chapter, which covers parts of Gasconade and Franklin Counties, hosted annual banquets in 2007 and 2008. This new and very active chapter also held a landowner workshop in May 2007 at Arvil and Doug Kappelmann's farm in Gasconade County. The tour attracted over 50 people interested in quail management. Department staff led the tour and were available to answer questions about quail management and cost share programs.

The Calamity Covey and Moreau Valley Quail Forever Chapters hosted a ladies pheasant hunt in September 2007 at a central Missouri game bird hunting preserve. Department staff were on hand to assist with the workshop. Over 20 ladies attended the event which included gun safety, dog training, habitat management, and an opportunity for each lady to pheasant hunt. This was the first chance for many of the participants to harvest a pheasant. The group and the Department have scheduled a youth hunt for March 2008.

Gasconade County Landowners Receive Adopt-A-Covey Award... Two Years in a Row!

In 2006 and 2007, two Gasconade County landowners received the Quail Unlimited, Great Plains Region, Adopt-A-Covey award for their efforts to restore bobwhite habitat. In 2006, Jerry and Chris Lairmore received the award. In 2007, Arvil and Doug Kappelmann were recognized. Both landowners have made their properties more quail friendly by establishing native grasses and wildflowers, edge feathering, planting food plots, planting shrub thickets, and restoring glades and woodlands.

Sweet Springs Quail Focus Area Landowner Workshop

On October 26, Department staff held a quail management workshop for 24 landowners in the Sweet Springs Quail Focus Area with help from local Quail Unlimited and Quail Forever chapters. The workshop started before sunrise with a fall whistle count survey to estimate quail densities on the demonstration farm owned by Doug Vogelsmeier. Doug has completed several habitat practices on his farm with the help of Private Land Conservationist Brent Vandeloecht and cost share funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Grant awarded to Quail Unlimited.

After the fall covey count survey, the group was treated to several informative presentations by Travis Dinsdale, Steven Noll, Brent Vandeloecht, and Susan Troxel-DeWitt on quail ecology and habitat management. The workshop also included a tour of the demonstration farm where Department staff pointed out examples of nesting, brooding, and shrubby cover for quail. That afternoon, the Saline County Cattlemen's Association provided a hearty lunch for the group while Department staff provided additional information on the Sweet Springs Quail Focus Area and available cost share programs.

Moniteau County Summer Prescribed Burn Workshop

On August 2, Private Land Conservationist, Doug Bensman, Resource Forester, Mike Morris, and Wildlife Biologist, Frank Drummond conducted a prescribed burn workshop in Moniteau County. About 12 landowners, Natural Resource Conservation Service and Soil and Water District personnel attended the workshop. The workshop involved a morning classroom session, followed by an afternoon trip to the Daryl Raithel's farm where burn equipment was displayed, and a demonstration prescribed burn was conducted by Department staff. Biologists are promoting summer prescribed burns as one way to improve rank warm-season grass fields for bobwhite quail.

Mid-Missouri Conservation Appreciation Day - Fun in the Field

On September 22, Department staff partnered with the Moreau Valley Quail Forever Chapter and Moniteau Monarchs National Wild Turkey Federation Chapter to co-sponsor the Mid-Missouri Conservation Appreciation Day which was graciously hosted by landowner, Two Guys With A Pond, LLC. The event focused on outdoor fun and education with an emphasis on quail habitat management. About 140 attendees participated in the all day outing which included a habitat management tour of the farm. Two Guys With A Pond, LLC have completed numerous habitat practices including woodland, glade and prairie restoration, CP-33 field borders, food plots, edge feathering, shrub plantings, and timber stand improvement. Demonstrations scheduled during the day included upland dog training, electro-fishing, furbearer trapping, and wild game cooking. Other activities encouraged archery, trap shooting, a virtual shooting simulator, catch and release fishing, antler scoring, a fur display and a display of Department lands in the Central Region. Lunch was also provided and Ralph Duren entertained the crowd. Drawings for a youth turkey, quail, and deer hunt gave three youngsters an outdoor experience to enjoy.

Kansas City Region

Platte River Falls Conservation Area Field Day

Chris Blunk, Paul Lowry, Andy Carmak, Brian Gilbert, and Jake Allman hosted a field day at Platte Falls Conservation Area on October 13. Twenty-five landowners attended the workshop to learn about biology and management of deer and turkey, timber and pond management, and of course a heavy emphasis on quail and upland habitat restoration. Several organizations provided support for the event including the Greater Kansas City Quality Deer Management Association, Platte County Longspurs National Wild Turkey Federation, and Kansas City Quail Unlimited Chapter.

Greater Prairie Chickens Management and Conservation Opportunity Areas Benefit Quail

Recent conservation efforts within the Cole Camp/Hi Lonesome Conservation Opportunity Area have made significant improvements for quail and grassland bird habitat. In 2007, Department staff and conservation partners worked to control woody and invasive vegetation, reestablish prairie, and conduct prescribed burns and managed grazing on private and public lands to benefit greater prairie chickens, quail, and other grassland birds. In fact, bird surveys at Hi Lonesome Prairie Conservation Area have shown a positive response by many grassland bird species, including quail, to recent management efforts. The Missouri Department of Conservation has also partnered with Audubon Missouri and the City of Cole Camp to hire Korey Wolfe as a community-based conservationist. Korey has been working with the City of Cole Camp and landowners within the Cole Camp/Hi Lonesome Conservation Opportunity Area to promote grassland conservation and outdoor recreational around Cole Camp.

Kansas City and Southwest Region Staff Help Out With Cherokee Plains Quail Forever's First Youth Bird Hunt

Staff from the Kansas City and Southwest Regions gathered on October 20 to assist with a youth upland bird hunting clinic sponsored by the Cherokee Plains Chapter of Quail Forever. The event taught ten area youth about game bird biology, hunting tips, hunting with dogs, shooting techniques, and game care and cooking. All the kids and their parents had a great time, as did the volunteers. Department staff participating included Derek Farwell, Lana Wilson, Chris Daniel, Jeremy Swope, and Eric Calvert, Zeb Jordan, and Scott Sudkamp.

Quail Unlimited National Convention – Repeat!

In 2006 and 2007, Quail Unlimited held their national convention and trade show in the Kansas City area. Both years the convention included habitat tours, equipment demonstrations, habitat workshops, and hunting seminars. In 2008 the event will be held in Springfield, Missouri. Department staff helped with workshops, seminars and trade show.

Ninth Annual Landowner Night in Garden City

The West Central Quail Unlimited Chapter hosted their Ninth Annual Landowner Night in Garden City on November 13. Fifty people attended the annual event to learn about the different cost share programs they can use to restore quail habitat on their property. Local staff from the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Department of Conservation, Department of Natural Resources, and Quail Unlimited gave presentations and answered questions. Many of the attendees own property in the Cass County Focus Area, which continues to be one of the most active and successful focus areas in the state as a result of energetic staff and conservation partners. The West Central Chapter of Quail Unlimited regularly hosts workshops, hosts an annual banquet, and other special events. Funds raised by the chapter will be matched by the Department of Conservation and offered to landowners interested in quail management as cost share.

"40 years ago, on this farm there were 6 coveys of birds, and now there are only 2 coveys before I started habitat restoration. After completing some buffers and edge feathering last year, I am now holding 4 coveys again in the quality habitat!!" "I am excited to do my part to restore quail numbers on my farm back to the "Glory Days!!"

RICHARD CAVANNAH

Northeast Region

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Benefits Landowners and Quail in Northeast Region

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has been a huge success for landowners in the Northeast Region. Over 7,000 acres have been enrolled in the region with most located in Macon, Monroe, and Randolph Counties. Department biologists have worked closely with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency by providing technical assistance to landowners enrolled in the program. Of the acres enrolled, nearly half were enrolled as CP-33 field borders, which requires shrubby cover and mid-contract management specifically for quail habitat.

Successful Youth Hunt is a Blast for Kids

The Ten Rivers Pheasants Forever Chapter youth hunt gave 14 kids the opportunity to bag pheasants at a local game bird hunting preserve. The day started with a gun safety course and a round of sporting clays. Department staff and members from Pheasant Forever and Quail Forever helped with the field day and hunt. The day was a success as several young hunters harvested their first pheasant – something they will always remember.

Northeast Region Quail Focus Areas

On August 8, 2007, the second annual meeting was held for the Knox County Quail Focus Area. Twenty people attended the event which featured a cookout and habitat tour led by Department staff. A four member landowner advisory committee was reappointed by the landowners in attendance to work with the Department on future conservation efforts. One-third of the landowners in the Quail Focus area are actively cooperating with the Department to restore quail habitat on their properties.

In Monroe County, landowners in the Paris Quail Focus Area continue to restore and manage habitat for quail. Landowners in the focus area, like Donald Simpson, are working with Private Land Conservationist, Jamie Ebbesmeyer and Quail Unlimited Biologist, Corinne Mann to improve habitat, hold focus area meetings and workshops. Jamie, Corrine and several landowners are working together to conduct spring and fall quail counts to monitor quail densities in the focus area. The Mark Twain Chapter of Quail Unlimited has played a key role in the success of this focus area by hosting banquets and workshops.

Northeast Region Public Land Management Highlights

In 2007, Wildlife and Forestry Division staff worked to restore natural communities such as woodland and savannas on several conservation areas. Area managers continue to concentrate their habitat work on several conservation areas located in Conservation Opportunity Areas and on the two Quail Emphasis Areas in the region – Henry Sever and Thomas Hill Reservoir Conservation Areas. Like many other regions, Northeast Region staff are improving early successional habitats by strip disking, reducing woody encroachment, prescribed burning and controlling invasive vegetation. For example, staff worked hard to complete edge feathering, shrub planting and fescue eradication projects at Henry Sever Conservation Area. As a result of good weather, staff were also able to complete several large prescribed burns. Most notably was a large woodland and savanna prescribed burn on Union Ridge Conservation Area.

Landowner Accomplishments in the Mystic Focus Area Helps Grassland Wildlife

Conservation partners and landowners in the Mystic Focus Area in southwest Adair and southeast Sullivan Counties remain committed to restoring grassland habitat to benefit greater prairie chickens and grassland birds. One reason for the interest has been the partnerships between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Prairie Foundation, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Missouri Department of Conservation. These agencies are working together to promote grassland conservation on private land by providing cost share funds, technical assistance, and rental equipment which has helped restore hundreds of acres of open grassland habitat for greater prairie chickens. For example, one landowner, working with Missouri Prairie Foundation and Department of Conservation, has rested over 80 acres of rich native prairie in exchange for hay. With further assistance, he intends to incorporate prescribed fire on these acres. On another farm, a landowner is restoring hundreds of acres of diverse prairie through a unique partnership with state and federal agencies, Missouri Prairie Foundation, and Premium Standard Farms. The landowner will be using cost share funds from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to complete the habitat work.

Northwest Region

Covey Headquarters Focus Area in Dekalb and Andrew Counties: Home of National Award Winners and the Covey Headquarter Newsletter!

The partnership with the St. Joseph Heartland Chapter of Quail Unlimited continued to be strong and productive in 2007. The Heartland Chapter was awarded the Quail Unlimited National Habitat Award for the second straight year at the Quail Unlimited National Convention in July 2007. With the help of the local Quail Unlimited Chapter, Private Land Conservationist Jeff Powelson worked with 40 landowners to apply prescribed fire to over 2,500 acres of CRP and other grasslands. Quail Unlimited volunteers assisted with several of the prescribed burns.

The Heartland Chapter and the Department also hosted a youth quail hunt. The Quail Unlimited chapter supplied volunteers, food, and a farm to host the event and the Missouri Department of Conservation provided guns, ammunition, and personnel to supervise shooting events. The youth were also treated to a short course on quail biology.

Jeff Powelson, Area Biologist Travis Dinsdale, and University of Missouri Outreach and Extension Specialist Greg Humphrey continue to collaborate on the production of the quarterly Covey Headquarters Newsletter which has grown over the years to a subscription list of nearly 10,000. The Covey Headquarters Newsletter provides landowners and upland hunters the latest information on habitat management, monitoring efforts, and landowner success stories. The newsletter is free to all subscribers.

Landowners in 2C Focus Area Improve CRP Acres for Quail

In 2007, cost share programs such as CRP-BOB helped numerous landowners in the focus area improve existing CRP grasslands for quail. For example, the cost share program was utilized by 30 landowners to conduct prescribed burns on 1,065 acres, plant 91 acres of food plots, complete 4.1 acres of edge feathering, and eradicate 25 acres of sericea lespedeza. These habitat accomplishments complement a very successful 2006 where CRP-BOB was employed to help 24 landowners burn 1,208 acres, plant 101 acres of food plots, establish eight acres of downed woody cover, and eradicate 60 acres of sericea lespedeza. Twenty-six landowners have enrolled in CRP-BOB for 2008 and should show comparable accomplishments in the upcoming year. To date, Department staffs have developed management plans on 290 tracts within the focus area totaling 44,925 acres! The results more than speak for themselves with some landowners and hunters within the focus area reporting close to one covey per hunting hour.

Youth Hunt in the 2C Focus Area

On the outreach front, a youth pheasant hunt event was conducted on private land within the focus area in cooperation with Northwest Region Protection Division staff. The event was very successful with 25 youth in attendance. During the event the young boys and girls learned about quail and grassland bird habitat, hunted live birds over bird dogs, shot trap, and learned a little about muzzleloaders and turkey hunting.

Seat Conservation Area and Quail Focus Areas

The Emmitt and Leah Seat Conservation Area encompasses 3,500 acres and is complemented by the Seat and Albany Quail Focus Areas, which consists of 15,000 acres of the surrounding landscape in Worth and Gentry Counties. Since 2004, considerable habitat improvements have been made on the Seat Conservation Area when the area was designated as a Quail Emphasis Area. Since 2004, over 300 acres of cool-season grass have been converted to native grasses and wildflowers. Work teams have also completed 3.5 miles of edge feathering, 14 miles of edge enhancement, and 2,500 acres of prescribed burns on the conservation area. A demonstration site has been designated on the area showcasing a variety of management techniques. Quail and grassland bird monitoring sites have been established on both private and public land within the Quail Focus Areas to determine the effectiveness of habitat management.

Since 2004, 13 private landowners within the Seat and Albany Quail Focus Areas have been working together to restore quail habitat. Beyond improving habitat, landowners within the focus area have shared their success by hosting two landowner workshops and a youth dove clinic and field trip. Marketing efforts have included distribution of caps, quail management CD's, quail calendars, and articles for local Soil and Water Conservation District newsletters. Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Soil and Water Conservation District staffs have also helped promote quail management, cost share programs and have been instrumental to the success of the Seat and Albany Quail Focus Areas.

Grassland Evaluation Contest Includes "Quail Habitat" Test

Private Land Conservationist Steve Fisher helped coordinate the annual Northwest Region Grassland Evaluation Contest for Future Farmers of America (FFA) with about 60 participants in attendance. One of the four contest sections is the "Wildlife" part, where participant are challenged with evaluating an area specifically for quail habitat. The contest requires students to make decisions about grassland management that would directly improve limiting factors for quail and other early successional species. For several years, the Missouri Department of Conservation has assisted with both the regional and state grassland evaluation contests.

Strong Partnerships

The Quail Forever Short Grass Chapter of Livingston County organized in November 2007 and hit the ground running with its first fundraising banquet in December. The chapter is off to an ambitious start by participating in the recent Livingston County North Missouri Outdoor Classic Sport Show and is already laying plans for a landowner workshop in March 2008. The primary focus of the chapter is youth education and habitat restoration.

The Missouri Department of Conservation partnered with the Northwest Pheasants Forever Chapter to conduct a quail habitat field day on Roger Faber's farm in Holt County. The event was very successful with 40 people in attendance. The field day resulted in several productive contacts and on-site visits for Private Land Conservationist Jim Pierson.

Regional Work Teams Focus on Public Land Management

In recent years, Department work teams have increased early successional and natural community work on many conservation areas in the Northwest Region. In fact, a significant amount of work has been completed on the five Quail Emphasis Areas in the region. For example, just this last year, over 50 acres of cool-season grass were converted to native grasses and wildflowers at Bonanza Conservation Area. At Bunch Hollow Conservation Area, almost ten miles of edge feathering has been completed by Department work teams and hired habitat contractors since 2004. Staff are also improving quail and grassland bird habitat on other conservation areas in the region. For example, at Pony Express Conservation Area, Wildlife Division staff planted acres of sunflower fields for the managed dove hunts on the area and were also able to complete over 200 acres of summer prescribed burns to control woody vegetation and improve early successional habitat on the area.

Grand River Grasslands Conservation Opportunity Area

Private Land Conservationist Kendall Coleman has worked with 13 cooperators within the Grand River Grasslands Focus Area representing 10,000 acres of privately owned land in this important geography. The focus area received \$45,000 in cost share funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bi-State Grant and \$12,000 from the Missouri Department of Conservation for resource improvements on private land. These funds will be used to reduce woody encroachment on 165 acres and convert 70 acres of cool-season grass to native warm-season grasses and wildflowers. Projects are currently in various stages of completion.

On the outreach and education front, Kendall and other Department staff met with the Harrison County Cattlemen's Association on three different occasions: one meeting to present general biology information on greater prairie chickens, one to discuss patch burn grazing concepts, and lastly, a prescribed burn workshop. A focus group meeting was also conducted at Eagleville, Missouri to discuss opportunities and strategies related to managing habitat for grassland birds on private land. Invitations were also mailed to area farmers to sit in the viewing blind at Dunn Ranch and observe booming prairie chickens. Five landowners took advantage of this unique opportunity. Department staff and the Harrison County Cattlemen's Association hope their efforts will result in better grassland management for cattle, prairie chickens, and quail.

Wildlife, Private Land Services, and Resource Science Division staff began trapping and radio tagging chickens within the focus area in preparation for an upcoming nesting study. So far, 21 birds (15 females, 6 males) have been trapped and fitted with radio collars. The birds will be tracked throughout the upcoming year so biologists can learn more about these extraordinary birds.

Ozark Region

Natural Community Restoration with Quail in Mind

In 2007, staff at the White River Trace Conservation Area in Dent County completed over 100 acres of woodland thinning. The goal is to restore an oak woodland community with a rich understory of native grasses, forbs, and legumes. The process involves thinning the overstocked trees and then reintroducing prescribed fire to further enhance the woodland community for quail and other woodland wildlife. Staff have already noticed quail and other wildlife using the area. The White River Trace Conservation Area is one of two Quail Emphasis Areas in the Ozark Region. The other is Cover Prairie Conservation Area in Howell County. Both areas support good quail populations and are popular destinations for upland game hunters.

Quail Forever Comes to the Ozarks in 2007

Two chapters of Quail Forever were started in the Ozark Region during 2007 with both hitting the ground running. The Ozark Hills Chapter, serving Dent and Phelps Counties, hosted a trap and skeet shoot at the Rolla Gun Club in June 2007. Approximately 25 people came out to improve their shooting skills and learn about what they can do to improve quail habitat on their properties. The Piney River Chapter, serving Texas and Wright Counties, hosted a youth hunt that attracted 19 kids. Department staff from Protection, Private Land Services, Forestry, and Wildlife Divisions assisted with the hunt as did members from the local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Both Quail Forever chapters hosted their first banquets and will be providing funds to be matched by the Missouri Department of Conservation for habitat improvements on private lands during 2008.

Wright County Quail Focus Areas

Conservation Agent Keith Wollard and Private Land Conservationist Lesly Holt continued to work with landowners in the Wright County Quail Focus Area. This focus area was created in 2004 and has been growing ever since. In fact, landowners in the focus area were highlighted in the July 2006 Missouri Conservationist for their efforts to restore early successional and natural communities for bobwhite quail. Landowners have converted hundreds of acres of cool-season grass pasture to native warm-season grasses and wildflowers to the benefit of quail and cattle! Keith and Lesly have also provided landowners technical and financial assistance to restore natural communities, conducted prescribed burns, edge feathering, and plant native shrubs. Much of the work completed would not have been possible if it were not for several agencies working together. As a result of the Wright County Quail Focus Area, a unique partnership was formed between the Missouri Department of Conservation, Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Landowners in the focus area have seen a positive response in quail densities in a short amount of time due to the habitat improvements landowners have made.

Howell County Focus Area

In Howell County, Private Land Conservationist Brad McKee has been working with landowners to restore open woodland communities and convert cool-season grasses to natives. For example, Mark and Kim Dake have restored several hundred acres of open woodland and converted over 70 acres of cool-season grass pasture to a diverse mix of native grasses and wildflowers with technical and financial assistance from the Missouri Department of Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resource Conservation Service. As a result, the Dake's are seeing more wildlife on their farm than ever before, and their cattle now have a reliable source of summer forage. For the past two years, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff have been conducting summer bird surveys on Mark and Kim Dake's farm and have found that quail and field sparrow densities have doubled since they started their habitat work.

Saint Louis Region

An Up-and-Coming Quail Focus Area

Private Land Conservationist Jeff Esely held a quail habitat farm tour in the Lincoln County Quail Focus Area in 2007. The Pike County Quail Unlimited Chapter provided lunch and wagons for the tour. The tour was held at the focus area demonstration farm which was developed to showcase good quail management. Approximately 55 people attended the event, with several from the focus area. Follow-up letters were mailed to each participant so hopefully the event will lead to measurable habitat improvements within the Quail Focus Area.

Work in Progress

Department staff have been busy restoring quail and grassland bird habitat on the White Conservation Area in Lincoln County. Wildlife Division staff have been reducing woody encroachment in old fields and restoring open woodlands and savannas. Biologists are also planning to convert several acres of old fields to native warm-season grasses and wildflowers. The long-term goal is to introduce cattle two or three years after the grass is established to create favorable nesting and brooding cover for quail and grassland birds on this Quail Emphasis Area.

"This quail program we have in place has made our goals a reality and we have only just begun! The quail program is a very versatile tool for all your wildlife so do not waist any more time, every little thing you do will help."

DUSTIN CHASTEEN,
FRANKLIN COUNTY MISSOURI

Southeast Region

Southeast Region Updates Regional Quail Plan to Show Benefits of USDA Programs.

In 2007, staff updated the Southeast Region Quail Plan to reflect the positive benefits of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and CRP. Several Bootheel counties are already approaching habitat restoration goals identified in the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) thanks to these programs. Department staff felt it was necessary to revise the current plan because of widespread success in the Bootheel and increased efforts to improve quail habitat on two Quail Emphasis Areas in the region.

Several Bootheel counties will likely be the first in the nation to reach NBCI habitat goals as a result of southeast Missouri farmers and landowners establishing native grass field borders, shrub plantings and edge feathering. In fact, Scott County has been recognized as the first county in the nation to do so. Local Department of Conservation, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service and Soil and Water Conservation District staffs have been working hand-in-hand with landowners to provide technical and financial assistance and rental equipment to complete the numerous habitat projects.

Quail monitoring in the Southeast Region in 2007 has shown a five-fold increase in the number of coveys on cropfields with CP33 field borders compared to cropfields without CRP field borders. The 2007 Annual Conservation Agent Roadside Survey showed a 200% increase in quail over 2006 levels in the Southeast Region. Hunters have also noticed the positive response in quail numbers during the 2007 hunting season with multiple parties finding more than one covey per hunting hour.

"As a chamber director I am very pleased when I hear the hunters commenting on the increase in quail they have seen in the area. Hunting has an economic impact on our area because just like the regular tourist hunters coming to the different communities spend money at the gas stations, restaurants/cafés, stores and so. It is amazing what restoring habitat and increasing a bird species to an area can do for the human population that inhabits it."

MISSY MARSHALL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SIKESTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Public Land Work Benefits Quail

Department staff have ramped up efforts to improve habitat conditions on several conservation areas in the Southeast Region, especially on the two Quail Emphasis Areas. Last fall, Department work teams were able to complete over 500 acres of prescribed burning on Crowley's Ridge Conservation Area. Staff also finished 20 acres of light disking, 10 acres of edge feathering, and sprayed over 100 acres of invasive vegetation to further enhance habitat on the area. At the Maintz Wildlife Management Area, staff completed 100 acres of prescribed burning, 5 acres of edge feathering, 20 acres of light disking and sprayed over 40 acres of invasive vegetation.

ATV Guided Quail Habitat Tour

A quail habitat field tour was held last July in Cape Girardeau County. The ATV guided tour attracted 45 landowners with several from within the Gordonville Quail Focus Area. The ATV guided tour was held on a farm where a significant amount of habitat work has been completed in recent years. Department staff were on hand to lead the tour and to answer questions about cost share programs and quail habitat practices.

Southwest Region

Southwest Region's Model Farm Exhibit

As part of the regional marketing for the state quail plan, the Southwest Region included the development of a scale-model "typical" production-farm exhibit. The exhibit visually demonstrates some of the most common quail management practices that could be implemented on a rural Missouri farm landscape. Funding for the exhibit has come from the Department of Conservation, Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, and the Ozark Plateau Chapter of Quail Forever.

The exhibit has two halves with the exact same landscape layout on both sides. One half shows "good" habitat management practices, and the other "bad" ones. The tabletop model of a farm scene will be used at fairs, field days, school events, workshops, agriculture conferences, etc. to show private landowners and others the kinds of habitat practices the Department promotes for quail and grassland species. The exhibit will be made available to any of our resource partners to use at any appropriate function, such as Soil & Water Conservation District annual meetings or conservation partner annual banquets.

Bobwhite Quail Featured at Major Farm Event

The Fall Farmfest in Springfield attracts nearly 50,000 landowners from across the region and neighboring states. Last October, the majority of these landowners filtered through the Missouri Department of Conservation exhibit over the three-day event. Regional staff from Private Land Services, Protection, Forestry, and Outreach & Education Divisions answered questions nearly non-stop from the public, including ones related to the quail exhibits, which have become a regular feature of this event. What makes this event so unique from others we participate in is the fact that the audience is nearly 100% rural landowners or people with ties to managing the land. Plans are to continue to target quail through educational exhibits over the next several years at the Fall Farmfest.

Talbot Landowner Cooperative Expands in Southwest Region Focus Area

Private Land Conservationist Mark Hutchings and Wildlife Management Biologist Frank Loncarich continued work with several Lawrence County landowners close to the Talbot Conservation Area, one of three Quail Emphasis Areas in Southwest Region. As a result of their efforts and private landowner interest in restoring quail habitat, a landowner cooperative is starting to emerge around the Talbot Conservation Area. Farmers and recreational landowners in the cooperative are working together to improve quail and grassland bird habitat by sharing equipment, holding meetings, and helping each other with habitat projects. For example, Rick Colley has planted native grasses and wildflowers and fenced out adjacent woodlots to benefit quail. Close by, Mason Colley will be planting 40 acres of warm-season grass this spring and the group plans to burn Robert Webb's remnant prairie and open woodland this spring to control cool-season grasses and woody vegetation. Some landowners in the focus area will be installing CP-33 buffers this year because of the economic benefits and habitat improvements the program provides. Mark and Frank have also hosted tours on the Talbot Conservation Area to highlight woodland and savanna restoration and early successional habitat management such as herbicide spraying, food plots, light disking, and managed grazing for wildlife.

Tallgrass Prairie Management for Grassland Birds

A major goal in 2007 and 2008 for Wildlife Division in the Southwest Region is to treat approximately 5,000 acres of prairie or grassland on conservation areas with prescribed fire, invasive plant control, or woody vegetation removal. Work teams are quickly approaching this goal as a result of the good weather last summer and fall.

District work teams are also recreating prairie grasslands by converting fescue fields to cropland, and eventually a diverse mix of native grasses, wildflowers and native legumes. The entire restoration process takes five to seven years before native wildflowers start to bloom, but the long wait is worth it. So far, Wildlife Division staff has restored several hundred acres of prairie and more are in various stages of restoration. Many of these converted fields support good populations of quail and grassland birds like short-eared owls and grasshopper sparrows. Future plans will be to work with permittee farmers to graze the restored grassland to promote better nesting and brooding habitat for quail and prairie chickens.

For more information on northern bobwhite or to share your landowner success story, contact the Missouri Department of Conservation at 573-751-4115 or Regional Office.

Northwest Regional Office
701 James McCarthy Drive
St. Joseph, MO 64507
(816) 271-3100

Ozark Regional Office
551 Joe Jones Blvd.
West Plains, MO 65775
(417) 256-7161

Kansas City Regional Office
3424 N.W. Duncan Road
Blue Springs, MO 64015
(816) 655-6250

Northeast Regional Office
3500 S. Baltimore
Kirksville, MO 63501
(660) 785-2424

Southwest Regional Office
2630 N. Mayfair
Springfield, MO 65803
(417) 895-6880

St. Louis Regional Office
2360 Highway D
St. Charles, MO 63304
(636) 441-4554

Central Regional Office
1907 Hillcrest Drive
Columbia, MO 65201
(573) 884-6861

Southeast Regional Office
2302 County Park Drive
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
(573) 290-5730